How to Read a Poem

* When does the poet move from clarity to mystery; that is, at what point does the reader respond with the unsayable/the realization of some truth about life; the theme; the “Ah!”? How do you know? Can you understand the meaning of the poem at this point? If so, explain.
* Who is the speaker?
  + What draws his/her attention?
  + What conflicts do you see the speaker experiencing in the poem?
* Examine how the poet creates the complexity/ambiguity/tension that is the mystery ***describe the mixture of the simple and complex*** (complexity, ambiguity, paradox); in other words, **identify and explain** how he/she creates mystery through:
* **Contrasts**
* **Images**
  + Make a list of the images in the poem. Group like images together. What do the groupings suggest to you?
  + Underline and make notes about words that interest you.
* **Figures of Speech**
* **Sound Devices**
* **Diction**
* **Irony**
* **Symbols, etc.**
* **Tone** (Satirical, etc.)

Write notes about how each contributes to the meaning of the poem.

* Look at the form: how does the form reflect/aid in the narrative structure (progressing ideas)
* Examine the significance/effectiveness of the title in relation to the theme.
* Write at the bottom what you think the poem is literally about.
* Write what you think is the theme.
* Now write a statement giving the techniques you think the poet uses to achieve this theme.